Amendments

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently amended) A method for instant messaging on a <u>recipient's</u> computer system, including:

> <u>on the recipient's computer system,</u> receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

> <u>on the recipient's computer system,</u> determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;

> sending a request <u>from the recipient's computer system</u> to a character server with said identification of said sender<u>, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character</u>;

> receiving <u>in the recipient's computer system</u> from said character server ~~an~~ <u>the</u> animated character associated with said sender;

> displaying said animated character associated with said sender<u> on the recipient's computer system</u>; and

> delivering said content ~~to a user~~ <u>on the recipient's computer system</u> through said animated character.

Claims 2-8 (Cancelled)

Claim 9 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 further including:

> periodically retrieving advertisement details from a server;

> downloading <u>to the recipient's computer system</u> an animated advertising character specified to represent said advertisement;

> displaying <u>on the recipient's computer system</u> said animated advertising character specified to represent said advertisement; and

> delivering content specified for said advertisement<u> on the recipient's computer system through said animated advertising character</u>.

Claim 10 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further including:

> sending an alert to a server;

> receiving <u>in the recipient's computer system</u> a response containing content from said server generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) application;

displaying <u>on the recipient's computer system</u> an animated character associated with said AI application;

and

delivering said content ~~to a user~~ <u>on the recipient's computer system</u> through said animated character associated with said AI application.

Claim 11 (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said sending an alert includes:

sending a message indicating that a web search is to be performed; and sending keywords to search in said web search.

Claim 12 (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said delivering said content comprises delivering results of said web search.

Claim 13 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further including:

<u>associating a sender with a plurality of predefined animated characters; and</u>

allowing the sender to select <u>an animated character</u> from ~~one or more~~ <u>the plurality of</u> predefined animated characters <u>associated with the sender</u> to be displayed on ~~a~~ <u>the</u> recipient's computer system ~~when~~ <u>in the event the</u> ~~said~~ sender sends an IM message to said recipient<u>'s computer system</u>.

Claim 14 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further including:

<u>initially</u> allowing the sender to upload an image ~~to be used~~ <u>for use</u> in creating <u>a record of</u> an animated character to be displayed on ~~a~~ <u>the</u> recipient's computer system when said sender sends an IM message to said recipient<u>'s computer system</u>.

Claim 15 (Currently amended) A method for instant messaging on a <u>recipient's</u> digital communication system ~~such as a computer system or digital telephone system or combination thereof~~, including:

receiving <u>on the recipient's digital communication system</u> one or more instant messages (IM) containing content from ~~one or more~~ <u>at least one</u> senders<u>, each at least one sender associated with a specific animated character</u>;

forming a queue by creating a dynamic array and inserting <u>an</u> incoming message into said queue;

determining an identification of said <u>at least one</u> sender of <u>one of</u> said IM<u>s</u> from said IM;

sending a request to a character server with said identification of said sender;

receiving from said character server an animated character associated with said sender;

controlling the timing of operations of actions in the queue and when required displaying at least one one of said animated characters character associated with said a respective sender; and

delivering said content to a user on the recipient's computer system through said at least one animated character.

Claims 16-18 (Cancelled)

Claim 19 (Currently amended) A method for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

receiving a request in a character server from a computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an the IM message to said user recipient's computer system, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

querying a database in said character server with said identification to identify an the animated character associated with the sender;

receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database,

and forwarding said animated character from said character server to said user recipient's computer system.

Claims 20-30 (Cancelled)

Claim 31 (Currently amended) An apparatus for instant messaging (IM) on a computer system, including:

an IM receiver for receiving at least one Instant Message (IM) from at least one sender;

a sender identification determiner coupled to said IM receiver, for determining the identity of the sender of a received IM any IM received;

a server request sender coupled responsive to said sender identification determiner for forwarding the identity of a sender of an IM to a character server, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

an animated character receiver for receiving an animated character associated with the respective sender from said character server, and

an animated character displayer coupled to said IM receiver and said animated character receiver;

and an animated character content deliverer coupled to said animated character displayer.

Claims 32-38 (Cancelled)

Claim 39 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

an advertisement details periodic retriever; and

an animated character downloader coupled to said advertisement details periodic retriever and to said animated character content deliverer

Claim 40 (Original) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

a server alert sender;

an artificial intelligence response receiver coupled to said animated character displayer and to said animated character content deliverer.

Claim 41 (Original) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein said server alert sender includes:

a web search message sender; and

a keyword sender coupled to said web search message sender.

Claim 42 (Cancelled)

Claim 43 (Currently amended) An apparatus for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

an animated character request receiver, for receiving <u>from a computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) </u>a request ~~from a recipient of an IM~~ for an animated character, said request including data that identifies the sender of the IM message;

a database query generator coupled to said animated character request receiver for generating a query;

an animated character database information receiver for querying a database<u> having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character </u>~~with said query~~ and obtaining from said database ~~an~~ <u>the </u>animated character associated with the sender; and

an animated character database information forwarder coupled to said animated character database information receiver for forwarding said

animated character to said recipient's computer system.

Claims 44-49 (Cancelled)

Claim 50 (Currently amended) An apparatus for instant messaging on a computer system, including:

in a recipient's computer system, means for receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

in the recipient's computer system, means for determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;

in the recipient's computer system, means for sending a request from the recipient's computer system to a character server with said identification of said sender, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

in the recipient's computer system, means for receiving from said character server an said animated character associated only with said sender

in the recipient's computer system, means for displaying said animated character associated with said sender; and

means for delivering said content to a user on the recipient's computer system through said animated character.

Claims 51-61 (Cancelled)

Claim 62 (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the sender to select from one or more predefined animated characters to be displayed on a the recipient's computer system when said sender sends an IM message to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 63 (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the sender to upload an image to be used in creating an animated character to be displayed on a the recipient's computer system when said sender sends an IM message to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 64 (Currently amended) An apparatus for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

means for receiving from a computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) a request from a user for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of an the IM message to said user;

means for querying a database with said identification to identify an animated character associated only with the sender, said database having

records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

means for receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database; and

means for forwarding said animated character to said ~~user~~ recipient's computer system.

Claim 65-78 (Cancelled)

Claim 79 (Currently amended) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for instant messaging on a computer system, the method including:

receiving on the machine an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;

sending a request from the machine to a character server with said identification of said sender, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

receiving on the machine from said character server an animated character associated with said sender

displaying on the machine an animated character associated with said sender; and

delivering said content ~~to a user~~ on the machine through said animated character.

Claim 80 (Currently amended) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for managing an Instant Messaging ~~(IM)~~ system, the method including:

receiving a request from a ~~user~~ computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of ~~an~~ the IM ~~message~~ to said ~~user~~ recipient's computer system;

querying a database with said identification to identify an animated character associated with the sender, said database having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database, and

forwarding said animated character to said ~~user~~ recipient's computer system.

Claim 81 (New) The method of claim 1 wherein delivering said content to the recipient's computer system includes:

converting text from said IM into audio through text-to-speech synthesis; and playing said audio.

Claim 82 (New) The method of claim 81, wherein delivering said content to the recipient's computer system further includes:

animating said character in synchronization with said playing of said audio.

Claim 83 (New) The method of claim 82, wherein delivering said content to the recipient's computer system further includes:

detecting an emoticon in said IM; and

animating said character in a way that reflects an emotion of said emoticon.

Claim 84 (New) The method of claim 1, wherein displaying said animated character includes displaying said animated character outside of an IM window on a screen.

Claim 85 (New) The method of claim 84, further including enabling said recipient to move said animated character anywhere on the screen.

Claim 86 (New) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein said means for delivering includes:

means for converting text from said IM into audio through text-to-speech synthesis; and

means for playing said audio.

Claim 87 (New) The apparatus of claim 86, wherein said means for delivering further includes:

means for animating said character in synchronization with said playing of said audio.

Claim 88 (New) The apparatus of claim 86, wherein said means for delivering further includes:

means for detecting an emoticon in said IM; and

means for animating said character in a way that reflects an emotion of said

emoticon.

Claim 89 (New) The apparatus of 50, wherein said means for displaying includes means for displaying said animated character outside of an IM window on a screen.

Claim 90 (New) The apparatus of claim 89, further including means for enabling said recipient to move said animated character anywhere on the screen.